



March 4, 2003

## **Two sentenced for a Providence marijuana grow that was led by drug dealer James St. Jacques**

A federal judge has sentenced **Steven J. Balthazard**, of North Attleboro, to 168 months in federal prison and codefendant **Steven J. Souve**,<sup>1</sup> of Pawtucket, to 151 months for their roles in helping to run a marijuana cultivation operation that was led by **James St. Jacques**. St. Jacques, a convicted drug dealer and a murder suspect, committed suicide in his prison cell last April.

United States Attorney Margaret E. Curran announced the sentences, which Senior U.S. District Court Judge Ronald R. Lagueux imposed today in U.S. District Court, Providence. Balthazard, 40, of 898 Longview Drive, North Attleboro, and Souve, 34, of 80 McAloon Street, Pawtucket, who had been free on bond after being convicted in December of conspiracy to manufacture and distribute marijuana, were taken into custody immediately after the sentencing. Judge Lagueux also fined Souve \$100 and Balthazard \$20,000.

The marijuana cultivation operation was uncovered in September 2000, when FBI agents and police from several Rhode Island communities seized more than 9,000 marijuana plants from an industrial building on Smith Hill in Providence.

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<sup>1</sup> pronounced: "BAL-thu-zard and SOO-vay

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### **Partners**

During a two-week trial in December, Assistant U.S. Attorney Gerard B. Sullivan and Assistant Rhode Island Attorney General Paul Daly presented evidence from several witnesses that Souve and Balthazard were partners with St. Jacques in the marijuana manufacturing operation, which dated back to at least 1994. Evidence showed that they helped run the operation and that they shared in the profits.

### **“Jimmy’s world”**

Assistant U.S. Attorney Sullivan said during his closing argument that the trial of Balthazard and Souve was about “Jimmy’s world,” referring to St. Jacques, who at the time of his death was serving a nine-year sentence for cocaine trafficking and was a defendant in one murder and a suspect in another. St. Jacques, who pleaded guilty in 1991 to his role in the marijuana growing operation, hanged himself in his cell at the ACI on April 3, the day he was to go on trial for the murder of Robert LaForest, a St. Jacques associate who was found shot to death in Smithfield in 1992.

### **Murder admissions**

Assistant U.S. Attorney Sullivan presented evidence during the trial that St. Jacques had confessed to law enforcement his role in the murders of LaForest and another associate, Paul Ferguson, who disappeared in 1995. In August 2001, FBI agents unearthed Ferguson’s body from beneath a slab of concrete behind St. Jacques’ former home in Rehoboth. St. Jacques had forfeited that home to the United States because he had used it to facilitate drug trafficking. No one has been charged in Ferguson’s death.

### **Marijuana grow**

In September 2000, in an industrial building at 23 Oakie Street St., **FBI** agents, and detectives from several state and municipal police departments uncovered the grow operation. It featured hydroponically nurtured plants and high-intensity lights that revolved over 14 tables with marijuana plants on them. Agents removed 9,295 growing or previously harvested marijuana plants from the site.

More than a dozen federal, state, and municipal law enforcement agencies in Rhode Island and Massachusetts contributed to the investigation of St. Jacques' activities. The marijuana case was investigated by the **FBI** and the **Rhode Island Task Force of the New England High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA)**, which is led by the **FBI** and the **Rhode Island State Police**. That task force includes detectives from the **Providence, East Providence, Warwick, Cranston, Woonsocket, and Westerly Police Departments**. Also participating in the St. Jacques' investigation were **Pawtucket Police, Smithfield Police, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigations, the U.S. Department of Labor, Massachusetts State Police, and Rehoboth Police..** Assistant U.S. Attorney Sullivan and Assistant Rhode Island Attorney General Daly have prosecuted the various criminal cases against St. Jacques and his associates.

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